

Wild and Scenic Rivers

Based on the Draft License Application, Effects to These Values of Designated Wild and Scenic Rivers Must be Evaluated:

- Scenic – The Wild and Scenic Snake River is recognized nationally for its scenic qualities. The designated river corridor provides great contrasts of landform, vegetation, color, climate, and sound. Scenic qualities are recognized as an outstandingly remarkable value of the river.
- Scenic – Scenery is recognized as an outstandingly remarkable value of the Imnaha Wild and Scenic River. The river’s scenery is dominated by a diverse landscape creating high quality natural scenery. Manmade developments have a primitive, historic, or rustic western setting.
- Recreation – The Snake River’s designation into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System as well as the river’s inclusion within the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area, signifies the national importance of recreation values in the river corridor. The wide range of available recreation activities, the unique backcountry river setting, and the diversity of users combine to make recreation an outstandingly remarkable value of the designated river.
- Fish – In the Snake Wild and Scenic River there are several stocks of anadromous fish, including spring, summer, and fall Chinook salmon, sockeye salmon, summer steelhead, trout, and Pacific lamprey, as well as several other resident species of native fish. Nationally and regionally, the Snake River is known for its unique and diverse sport fishery. The river’s fishery is recognized as an outstandingly remarkable value.
- Wildlife – Diverse wildlife species inhabit the Snake Wild and Scenic River corridor and affirm its importance as wildlife habitat. The area incorporates significant migration, wintering, and year round habitat for numerous wildlife species. Wildlife is recognized as an outstandingly remarkable value of the river.

All river values are described in detail in management direction for the Snake and Imnaha Wild and Scenic River Plans (see below for information about management direction).

The Entire Snake Wild and Scenic River is Within the Study Area For the Proposed New License

In 1975, PL 94-199 (HCNRA), established the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area, and also amended the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (PL 90-542) to include the Snake River into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The HCNRA designated 71.5 miles of the Snake River as wild and scenic. The river is classified into the following segments: “Wild River” – The 31.5 miles from the Hells Canyon Dam to Pittsburg Landing; “Scenic River” – the 40.0 miles from Pittsburg Landing to the northern boundary of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. The river corridor is approximately a quarter-mile on each side of the ordinary high water mark.

The Hells Canyon Complex project area (FERC Project No. 1971) extends from Cobb Rapids below the community of Weiser, Idaho, at river mile (RM) 343 to Hells Canyon Dam at RM 247.6 on the Snake River a distance of just over 95 miles. Hells Canyon Dam is also the southern boundary of the Hells Canyon National Recreation (HCNRA). Besides the project area, the study area considered by Idaho Power Company (IPC) includes the free-flowing section of the Snake River below Hells Canyon Dam downstream to RM 176.1. The total river distance of the study area from north to south is about 170 miles, including the 71.5 miles of river designated the Snake Wild and Scenic River.

Wild and Scenic River Section 7(a) Determination for the Snake River

Section 7(a) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act provides a specific standard for review of developments outside the designated river corridor, below or above or on a stream tributary to a designated river. Such developments may occur as long as the project “will not invade the area or unreasonably diminish the scenic, recreational, and fish and wildlife values present in the area on the date of designation . . .” This standard applies to projects outside the river corridor but on the same river or a tributary. In conjunction with consideration of the new license proposal for the Hells Canyon Complex, the Forest Service will prepare a Wild and Scenic River Act, Section 7(a), determination for the Snake Wild and Scenic River.

The initial question to be addressed for a Wild and Scenic River Section 7 (a) determination is whether or not the proposed project invades the designated river. The term invade is defined as encroachment or intrusion upon. If the project is determined to invade the designated river, the proponent would be advised to develop measures to eliminate this unacceptable effected.

If the proposed project does not invade the designated river, the next question to be answered, relative to the standard in Section 7(a), is whether or not the proposed project will “unreasonably diminish” any of the specified values. Given that the standard implies that some diminution of values may be determined reasonable, there are two questions to consider:

1. Does the proposed project cause diminution of the scenic, recreational, and fish and wildlife values of the designated river as present at the date of designation?
2. If there is diminution, is it unreasonable? This would suggest an evaluation of the magnitude of the loss. Factors to be considered include
 - a. Whether the value contributed to the designation of the river (i.e., outstandingly remarkable); and,
 - b. The current condition and trends of the resource. (If diminution is determined unreasonable, measures may be recommended to reduce adverse effects to within acceptable levels.)

Management Direction for the Snake Wild and Scenic River to be Utilized in Analysis of the Proposed New License

In addition to the Wild and Scenic River Section 7 (a) determination prepared by the Forest Service, project analysis for the new proposal must consider effects of the proposal to the Snake Wild and Scenic River and evaluation of the proposal’s consistency with management direction for the river. The Wallowa-Whitman Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Land and

Resource Management Plan (1990), as amended, provides the management direction specific to the HCNRA Snake River Corridor (Management Area 8), which includes the Snake Wild and Scenic River. The primary emphasis is on maintaining the recreational experiences available at the time of designation. Maintenance of visual qualities, and the management of people are also emphasized.

Management direction is also provided in the decision for the 1994 Wild and Scenic Snake River Final Environmental Impact Statement and in the decision for the 1996 Outfitter and Guide Environmental Assessment.

The decision for the Wild and Scenic Snake River Recreation Management Plan (revised January 1999) also provides specific management direction for the river corridor. This most recent plan consolidated all previous management direction and amended the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Plan.

Management Objectives For the Snake Wild and Scenic River Include:

- Maintain or enhance the values for which the river was designated under the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.
- Maintain or enhance the values for which the HCNRA was established including the protection of cultural resources, fish and wildlife, unique biological communities, scientific values, and scenery.
- Provide a wide range of recreation uses compatible with the provisions of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.
- Resources will be managed in accordance with management direction as established in the Forest Plan as well applicable Forest-wide standards and guidelines.

Effects to the Imnaha Wild and Scenic River to be Evaluated Under Section 4(e) of the Federal Power Act

With enactment of PL 100-557, the Omnibus Oregon Wild and Scenic Act of 1988, an amendment to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, designated the Imnaha River as wild and scenic.

A portion of the Oxbow to Lolo transmission line for this project is located within the Imnaha Wild and Scenic River corridor. This line (#908) runs from Palette Junction to the town of Imnaha, a distance of approximately 6.3 mile on National Forest System lands within the designated river corridor. It is a 230 KV line located on wooden H frames, with no portion below the ordinary high-water mark of the Imnaha River. The line existed at the date of the river's designation (October 28, 1988). The Forest Service will consider direction in the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan as amended by the Imnaha Wild and Scenic River Management Plan as the basis for its evaluation under Section 4(e) of the Federal Power Act.

Management Direction for the Imnaha Wild and Scenic River to be Utilized in Analysis of

the Proposed New License

The Wallowa-Whitman Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Land and Resource Management Plan (1990), established management direction specific to Wild and Scenic Rivers (Management Area 7). The primary emphasis is to preserve the wild, scenic, and recreational values of those rivers or river segments added to the system by the Omnibus Oregon Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1988.

Specific direction for the Imnaha River Wild and Scenic corridor is defined in the Imnaha River Wild and Scenic River Management Plan (January 1993) and its accompanying EA.

The plan defines: standards and guides for federal lands; standards and guides for private lands and implementation in relation to the following ORV's

- Scenery
- Recreation
- Fisheries
- Wildlife
- Heritage Resources
- Vegetation and Botanical Resources
- Traditional Value/Lifestyle Adaptation

Wild and Scenic Imnaha River specified values

The Imnaha Wild and Scenic Management Plan addresses the specified values as identified by Section 7(a) as:

- Scenic - Is dominated by a diverse landscape creating high quality natural scenery. Manmade developments have a primitive, historic, or rustic western setting.
- Recreation – Is a combination of recreational activities including hunting, fishing, sightseeing, horseback riding, hiking, snowmobiling, and camping.
- Fish – Includes the population and habitat of the threatened spring and fall Snake River Chinook salmon, and sensitive steelhead and bull trout.
- Wildlife – Includes the wildlife population and habitat in the Imnaha River corridor, which includes Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep, mule deer, elk, and black bear. Proposed, Endangered, Threatened, and Sensitive (PETS) species of animals within the corridor are an important part of the OR value. These include, but not limited to, the Townsend's Big-Eared Bat, Peregrine Falcon and Bald Eagle.